
Guidance for Responding to a COVID Positive Employee

October 2021 Update

The community transmission rate of COVID-19 is HIGH in Lewis and Clark County. With more and more cases in Lewis and Clark County, sooner or later, your business may be personally affected by a case or a close contact to a case. It is important to know the best way to respond to this situation to limit further spread of disease as well as any associated impacts to your business.

- Individuals that test positive for COVID 19 (Case) are required to isolate. **Isolate means** to stay away from others, including those in an individual's home. A case must not be at work until cleared by the public health department.
- All employees that have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 must be sent home.

Notification and Investigation

- With the county's case numbers straining contact tracing efforts, employers and employees must act immediately by following isolation or quarantine guidance if there is a known COVID-19 case and/or contacts. Do not wait for a call from the health department before acting.
- Public Health investigates every case of COVID-19 and identifies close contacts as resources allow.
- Cases are isolated until cleared to return to normal activities by the public health nurse (PHN).
- Close contacts are notified by Public Health and given directions for quarantine.
 - If a contact is fully vaccinated, they should wear a mask when out in public for 14 days after last day of exposure to a positive COVID-19 case and get tested 3-5 days after exposure.
 - If a contact is unvaccinated, they should quarantine for 10 days, obtain a COVID-19 test and test again at 5-7 days after last exposure or immediately if symptoms develop. **Quarantine means** separation from others to prevent the spread of the disease. This separation means to stay home, maintain at least a 6-foot distance from others, and wear a mask if you have contact with others in the home.
- When cases outnumber health department resources, cases will be asked to identify and notify close contacts. Use the above information for protecting your staff and your business.
- Based on the most current research, CDC has updated their definition of a close contact.
 - **Close contact is defined** as anyone who has been within 6 feet of a confirmed case for at least 15 minutes during the infectious period. The infectious period begins 48 hours prior to the onset of symptoms until the case has been isolated.
 - Repeated short exposures that add up to 15 minutes over time is also a close contact.

- If you are NOT exposed directly to a case, you are not a close contact.
- If a close contact to a COVID-19 case becomes a case during their quarantine period, they will then be isolated until cleared by a Public Health nurse. Any close contacts to the new case will be quarantined.

To best protect your staff and limit the impact on your business, especially in this time of rapid community spread, tighten up all prevention processes.

- Conduct a health assessment of all staff before each shift.
- Send staff members home if they have symptom consistent with COVID-19.
- Send staff members home if they have tested positive for COVID-19, even if asymptomatic.
- Maintain 6 feet of physical distance from others.
- Wear face coverings when in the public or common areas. **Businesses can require face coverings for all employees and customers.**
- Do not gather in communal settings for long periods of time.
- Practice good hand hygiene.

Actions that you can take if you know of an employee who is sick

- Close off areas used by the person who is sick and do not use those areas until after cleaning and disinfecting.
- Wait as long as possible (at least several hours) before you clean and disinfect.
- If less than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, clean and disinfect the space.
- If more than 24 hours have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, cleaning is enough. You may choose to also disinfect depending on certain conditions or everyday practices required by your facility.
- If more than 3 days have passed since the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 has been in the space, no additional cleaning (beyond regular cleaning practices) is needed.

Clean and Disinfect

- Open doors and windows and use fans or HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) settings to [increase air circulation in the area](#).
- Use products from [EPA List N](#) according to the instructions on the product label.
- [Wear a mask](#) and [gloves](#) while cleaning and disinfecting.
- Focus on the immediate areas occupied by the person who is sick or diagnosed with COVID-19 unless they have already been cleaned and disinfected.
- [Vacuum the space if needed](#). Use a vacuum equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filter and bags, if available.
 - While vacuuming, temporarily turn off in-room, window-mounted, or on-wall recirculation heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems to avoid contamination of HVAC units.
 - Do NOT deactivate central HVAC systems. These systems provide better filtration capabilities and introduce outdoor air into the areas that they serve.
- It is safe to wash dirty laundry from a person who is sick with COVID-19 with other people's items, if needed.

- Ensure safe and correct use and storage of cleaning and disinfectant products, including storing such products securely and using PPE needed for the cleaning and disinfection products.
- Cleaning staff and others should clean hands often, including immediately after removing gloves. Wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

Additional Considerations for Employers

- Follow normal preventive actions while at work and home, including cleaning hands, wearing face coverings, and avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Educate all workers, including those performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up, to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19.
- Ensure workers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard (29 CFR 1910.1200).
- Comply with OSHA's standards on Bloodborne Pathogens (29 CFR 1910.1030), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and PPE (29 CFR 1910.132).

If you have questions or need technical assistance, please call the COVID-19 Hotline: 833-829-9219

If you suspect COVID-19, stay home and contact your medical provider.

For a link to this document and other local information: www.lccountymt.gov/covid-19